



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN MANAGERS  
AND BARRIERS IN THEIR CAREER ADVANCEMENT**

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**GSM 2001 3**

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IN THEIR CAREER ADVANCEMENT**

**By**

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**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the  
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Abstract of the thesis presented to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science.

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MARCH 2001

Supervisor : Dr. Raduan Che Rose

Faculty : Graduate School of Management

The objective of this study is to examine the attitude of the management level of a local commercial bank and its relationship with the causal attribution towards women managers' career advancement.

A survey research was conducted with the participation of 70 employees (both male and female) from the management level of a local commercial bank. The sample of the respondents was based on simple random sampling. Structured questionnaires using the six-point Likert - type scales were used to measure the dependent and independent variables. The data collected were analyzed using the SPSSPC software.

The frequency distribution and measures of central tendency were employed in a descriptive analysis while the relationships between variables were analysed by using the independent t-test and one way ANOVA.

The result reveals that more than half of the respondents (61.4%) have positive attitude towards women managers. The gender role of individuals also plays an important role in influencing the management level's attitude towards the women managers. Majority of the respondents identified that internal attributions for performance have a significant effects to the attitude towards women managers.

The internal attributions for performance such as competence in doing a job and the ability in doing job were found to have a significant effect on the attitude towards women managers. Among the external factors investigated, only the perception that the job was easy job has been identified as a factor that affects the performance of women managers. Results of the ANOVA test show that qualification is the only demographic variable that has a significant influence on management's level attitude women managers.

The study concludes that gender, internal attributions for performance and qualification contribute significantly to the management's attitude towards women managers.

From the findings, it is recommended that a proactive action need to be taken to retain the women managers in the organization. A comprehensive study covering factors such as psychological and sociological factors are also recommended for future research to enrich the present literature.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains.

**SIKAP TERHADAP PARA PENGURUS WANITA DAN HALANGAN-HALANGAN DALAM MENCAPAI KEMAJUAN KERJAYA MEREKA**

Oleh

NURZARINA ABD AZIZ

MARCH 2001

Pengerusi : Dr Raduan Che Rose

Fakulti : Pusat Pengajian Siswazah Pengurusan

Objektif utama kajian ini ialah untuk menilai sikap pihak pengurusan di sebuah bank komersial tempatan dan perkaitannya dengan dengan ciri-ciri pencapaian prestasi terhadap para pengurus wanita.

Satu kajian tinjauan telah dijalankan dengan melibatkan 70 pegawai bank di sebuah bank komersil tempatan (lelaki dan perempuan). Tinjauan ini dijalankan berdasarkan kaedah persampelan rawak mudah. Soal selidik yang berstruktur menggunakan skala Libert- enam point digunakan untuk mengukur independent variable' dan dependent variable'. Data-data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis menggunakan SPSSPC.

Taburan kekerapan dan penyelarasan digunakan dalam analisis 'deskriptif' manakala perkaitannya dengan 'variable-variable' dianalisis menggunakan t-test dan ANOVA.

Keputusan yang diperolehi menunjukkan lebih daripada separuh responden (61.4%) mempunyai sikap positif terhadap para pengurus wanita. Faktor gender bagi individu juga didapati memainkan peranan penting dalam mempengaruhi sikap pengurusan terhadap para pengurus wanita.

Kebanyakan dari responden telah mengenal pasti bahawa ciri-ciri pencapaian prestasi dalaman juga mempunyai kesan signifikan terhadap sikap kepada para pengurus wanita. Ciri-ciri pencapaian prestasi dalaman adalah seperti 'kecekapan menjalankan tugas' dan 'keupayaan membuat pekerjaan' didapati mempunyai kesan signifikan terhadap sikap kepada para pengurus wanita.

Diantara faktor luaran yang dikaji cuma 'pekerjaan yang mudah' telah dikenalpastikan sebagai faktor yang mempunyai kesan terhadap prestasi para pengurus wanita. Keputusan dari ujian Anova pula menunjukkan bahawa 'pencapaian akademik' adalah satu-satunya faktor demografik yang mempunyai signifikan terhadap sikap pihak pengurusan kepada para pengurus wanita.

Kajian ini secara keseluruhannya mendapati faktor gender, ciri-ciri prestasi dalaman dan pencapaian akademik mempunyai signifikan dalam mempengaruhi sikap pengurusan terhadap para pengurus wanita. Kajian ini juga mencadangkan bahawa langkah proaktif harus diambil untuk memastikan para pengurus wanita tidak meninggalkan organisasi. Disamping itu, untuk kajian selanjutnya faktor psikologi dan sosialogi perlu diambilkira untuk memperkukuhkan lagi kajian ini.



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- b) Dr Jamilah bt Othman, a member of the committee, for her professional and supportive advice.
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## **APPROVAL**

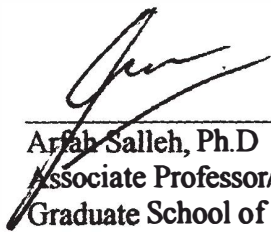
I certify that an Examination Committee met on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2001 to conduct the final examination of Nurzarina Abd Aziz on her Master of Science thesis entitled "Attitude Towards Women Managers and Barriers in their Career Advancement" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980. The committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:-

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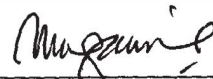


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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for the quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



Nurzarina bt Abd Aziz

Date : 8<sup>th</sup> March 2001

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most challenging environmental realities facing the organizations in this twenty-first century is the changing composition of labor force. For the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of women in the labor force. According to an ILO report (1993b), women workforce represents 36% of the working population and only 10% to 30% of them holds management positions while less than 5% of the working women hold the top positions. The same report further informs that U.S.A and Canada have the highest number of women in the management level among the industrialized countries while the lowest representation of women in management are in the developing countries such as in Thailand and Malaysia.

There have been extensive studies and reports of women in management in the West. Many of the studies reported that the women representation in management has been very low. A study conducted by Albertsen and Christensen (1993) finds that in 1987, although women represented 48 % of the labor force in Denmark, only 10% of them were in the middle management level. Similar situation existed in Netherlands where women represented a large part of the labor force but only a few women managed to reach the higher echelons.

## **Women in Management: An Overview**

Studies conducted by researchers on the topic of women in management in the West reveal that despite the large percentage of women in the labor force, the number of women pursuing the managerial level are relatively low compared to men (Tanton, 1994). Mc Wire (1992) states that in the United Kingdom, 43% of the workforce is women and only 10% of them is in the managerial positions. Another survey conducted by Vealle & Gold (1998), finds that women labor in United Kingdom has increased to 60% of the workforce, of which 21% of these women serves in the middle management level while 15% serves in the senior management level.

Similarly, Burke (1991) states that in 1988, in Canada there were about 84% of working women employed in the service industries and 80% of them were at the clerical level. Another study conducted by Still (1994), reveals that in Australia, senior women managers represent only 1.3% of the Australian workforce as compared to 11.2% of men in similar positions.

The argument that women are under represented in the management is further supported by Moore (1998), who found that women are still in the same profession after 15-20 years of working and are concentrated in junior and technical roles. In Australia, a survey conducted by Tilbrook (1998), shows that

the percentage of women managers has remained unchanged from 23.7% in 1987 to 23.6% in 1997. In Hong Kong, women labor force comprises 37% the 2.8 million total labor force. However, they only occupy 20% of the managerial and administrative positions (Chow, 1995).

In Malaysia, women at corporate levels are primarily involved in the service industries such as public relations, management, consultancy and communication. 80% of the women involved at corporate levels is working in public listed companies (Ariffin, 1992).

There are certain factors that contribute towards the small percentages of women's participation in higher level of management. The perception and attitude of other parties towards women seem to play an important role. A research conducted by Fatimah Hamid Don (1993) finds that the more educated a woman is, the more positive perception and attitude her parents and husbands would have towards her, which contribute towards her career advancement in her career. This finding is supported by Aminah Ahmad and Narimah Ismail (1991) in their study which shows that women whose husbands have more positive attitudes towards gender roles would have less burden with domestic, work which is one of the determining factors in career advancement amongst women.

## **Women in Management in Malaysia**

For the past 30 years, women in Malaysia have made significant progress towards the participation in the labor force. There was about 44% women, who forms half of the Malaysian population in the labor force as compared to 87% of the men population (Ariffin, 1992). The female participants' rate of entering the labor force has increased from 46.4% in 1990 to 52% in 2000 (Sharizat Jalil, 2000).

Prior to this until 1960s, women were regarded ideally suitable to be housewives and even if they were educated, they were suitable for limited choice of careers such as teachers, nurses or other similar 'feminine' occupations (Koshal, 1998). However, the trend has significantly changed in the 1970s, when female labor force has begun to move away from the subsistent rural economy to a greater involvement in the urban industrial and service sectors (Ariffin, 1992).

Ariffin (1992) further identified that the significant increase of women in labor force resulted from the following factors:-

- a) The rapid expansion of education facilities resulted in the change of womens' attitudes towards paid employment, improved skills employability and their earning capacity.
- b) The rapid economic development and industrialization have

created new job opportunities.

- c) The successful implementation of the New Economic Policy in eradicating poverty and restructuring the Malaysian society from rural to urban based, and from unpaid to paid employment.

The occupational structure of women's participation is stipulated in Table 1 which shows that at the administrative and managerial levels, women represented only 2.3% of the groups which is equal to half of the male participation (4.9%) at the same level. Other areas which were less represented women are agriculture and production sectors.

**Table 1. Employment Distribution By Occupation And Sex in 1970 – 98 (%)**  
Source: Year book of statistic Malaysia 1998

Occupational Category	1970		1980		1990		1998	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Professional, Technical & Related Workers	4.6	5.3	6.4	8.5	6.4	9.4	9	14
Administrative & Managerial Workers	1.0	0.1	1.4	0.3	2.8	0.6	4.9	2.3
Clerical & Related Workers	5.4	4.1	6.8	11.1	7.0	14.1	7.1	18.8
Sales & Related Workers	9.8	4.9	10.3	7.2	11.4	11.4	10.4	11.8
Service Workers	8.1	8.4	9.0	9.0	9.9	14.1	9.5	16
Agricultural Workers	47.6	66.83	35.9	46.3	29.4	28.1	21.0	14.9
Production & Related Workers	23.5	10.4	30.2	17.6	33.1	22.3	38	22.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

A higher percentage of women participation in the professional, technical and related work (women =14%, men=9%) is largely due to the categorization of the occupations of this category. The category includes teachers and nurses, which largely employs women, along with lawyers, engineers and doctors. About 18.8% of working women is involved in clerical and related work while the men who are involved in this category was about 7.1%. There is about 16% of working women who are involved in the service category while only 9.5% of the men is involved in the same category. In sales and related work, women participation is slightly higher (11.8%) as compared to men's participation at 10.5%.

Even though there is a significant increase in women's labor force (Ariffin, 1992), many of them are clustered in the lower and middle levels of management such as clerical staff, laborers and operators. These jobs are categorized as unchallenging, routine jobs and do not require any leadership qualities. Therefore, the career advancement in these categories is quite limited.

For the upper management level, the scenario is even worse. A study conducted by Norma Mansur (1994) reveals that women's search for management opportunities is becoming more difficult in 1990s due to the competition in the job market. She further argued that factors such as family responsibilities, employers' stereotyped attitudes and lack of career planning are some of the barriers hindering women's success as managers.



The Malaysian government has taken steps to recognize women's roles and their contributions to the economic development of our nation. The Equal Pay for Equal Work Policy was introduced in 1969 and a 'National Policy for Women' was established in 1991. These were the two significant steps made by the Government to show their support towards women's contribution to the country.

### **ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN MANAGERS**

There has been a significant increase of women in the labor force for the past thirty years. However, the percentage of women in the senior management positions is still low. Most probably, the barrier towards women career advancement is the existence of the gender role stereotyping.

Gender role stereotyping refers to fixed ideas that many people have of a particular type of person or thing which is often not true in reality. There seems to be a stereotype of specific traits which are believed to be essential for managerial success and women are believed not to possess those traits. Women are perceived as more gentle, sensitive, passive and less suitable to handle management responsibilities than men. On the contrary, men are more independent, objective, aggressive and better suited for such positions (Terborg and Ilgen, 1975).